

Sacramento-area school boards weigh budget cuts

dlambert@sacbee.com

Published Monday, Feb. 14, 2011

School boards throughout the state will hear recommendations for budget cuts over the next few weeks as they hurry to make staffing decisions by the March 15 deadline for preliminary layoff notices.

Two months later – on May 15 – districts issue final layoff notices.

"Recommending cuts is never an easy thing, and this year is especially hard because it's impossible to keep the cuts away from the classrooms," said Trent Allen, San Juan Unified School District spokesman. "The amount we need to find is too much to be able to nip and tuck here and there."

The cuts are a cause of great concern to employees and parents. Hundreds of them packed the San Juan board room last week when the trustees focused on personnel cuts.

By meeting's end, trustees had voted to issue preliminary pink slips to 357 teacher, vice principal, counselor and district-level administrator positions.

In January, San Juan trustees decided to eliminate adult education, offer busing only to special education students and to increase K-3 class sizes.

Allen said district officials will continue to look at additional cuts in the next month to fill a 2011-12 budget gap that could be anywhere from \$36.7 million to \$49.6 million.

Deciding how much hasn't been easy.

Last month, Gov. Jerry Brown said he won't make any new cuts to education if voters pass a June ballot measure to extend three tax increases. If they don't, K-12 and community colleges' share of the budget would be cut by at least \$2.2 billion.

This has left school district officials in a tough situation. Most districts have opted to come up with two budgets – one if the ballot passes and one if it does not.

SCHOOL BUDGET CUTS

School districts are determining various budget cuts and have to decide by March 15 how many employees will be given pink slips to solve budget woes. Those job cuts, however, won't be finalized until May 15. Complicating matters is that districts won't know how much state aid they will receive until June when Gov. Jerry Brown wants voters to approve certain tax increase extensions. Here's how local school districts will fare if the proposed extensions pass in June or fail.

SAC CITY UNIFIED

Budget gap: \$9.05 million; or, \$22.3 million if proposed tax increase extensions fail.

Proposed cuts: Reduce adult education; increase seventh- and eighth-grade class sizes from 31 to 35; reduce staff pay.

Additional cuts if tax fails: Eliminate busing; end stipends; cut out adult education; reduce counselors; increase class sizes to 40 in ninth grade, 36 in seventh and eighth grades, and 34 in fourth through sixth grades.

Board meetings on budget: First and third Thursday of each month, district offices, 5735 47th Ave.

Community meetings:

Tuesday: C.K. McClatchy High School, 3066 Freeport Blvd.

Wednesday: Kit Carson Middle School, 5301 N St.

Feb. 22: Rosemont High School, 9594 Kiefer Blvd.

Feb. 23: Will C. Wood Middle School, 6201 Lemon Hill Ave.

March 1: John Still Elementary School, 2200 John Still Drive.

March 2: John F. Kennedy High School, 6715 Gloria Drive.

March 8: Father Keith B. Kenny Elementary School, 3525 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

SAN JUAN UNIFIED

Budget gap: \$36.7 million; \$49.6 million if proposed extensions fail.

Approved cuts: Pink slip 357 teacher, vice principal, counselor and administrator positions; increase K-3 class size; eliminate adult education and all but mandatory busing.

Proposed cuts: Trustees will discuss more cuts March 8 at district headquarters, 3738 Walnut Ave., Carmichael.

FOLSOM CORDOVA UNIFIED

Budget gap: \$700,000;

\$12.4 million if proposed extensions fail.

Proposed cuts: Eliminate 66 classified positions, 37 teaching positions and 4.5 administration positions; trim operating expenses by \$1.8 million.

Meetings:

Wednesday: Forum at Mitchell Middle School, 2100 Zinfandel Drive, Rancho Cordova.

Thursday: Board action on preliminary layoff notices, Mills Middle School, 10439 Coloma Road, Rancho Cordova.

TWIN RIVERS UNIFIED

Budget gap: \$9.8 million if proposed extensions fail.

Proposed cuts: The district is counting on negotiated cuts in union contracts and reserves.

Meetings:

March 1: Trustees will discuss revised contracts and budget cuts at district headquarters at 5115

Dudley Blvd., McClellan.

ELK GROVE UNIFIED

Budget gap: \$40 million if proposed extensions fail.

Proposed cuts: Increase class sizes; reduce central office staff; cut supplies; reduce professional development opportunities.

Meetings:

Tuesday: Trustees will discuss proposed budget cuts at Robert Trigg Education Center, 9510 Elk Grove-Florin Road, Elk Grove.

Feb. 22: Trustees will vote on budget cuts, Robert L. Trigg Education Center.

NATOMAS UNIFIED

Budget gap: \$10 million

Proposed cuts: Layoff notices, program reductions and increased class sizes are possible. Chief Financial Officer John Christ doesn't expect the amount to be much less even if the proposed tax extensions pass. He said the district has cash-flow problems brought on because of state deferrals.

Meetings:

March 9: Trustees may vote on the cuts unless a special meeting is called sooner. The board meets at district headquarters, 1901 Arena Blvd.

© Copyright The Sacramento Bee. All rights reserved.

Call The Bee's Diana Lambert, (916) 321-1090. Follow her on Twitter @dianalambert.